



CHICAGO

ASTRONOMICAL

SOCIETY.

J. Y. SCAMMON, President.

W. H. WELLS, V.-President.

THOS. HOYNE, Secretary.

Dearborn Observatory:

PROFESSOR TRUMAN H. SAFFORD, DIRECTOR.

ELIAS COLBERT, Emeritus Assistant Director.

ABOUT eight and a half years ago a few prominent citizens of Chicago formed themselves into an Astronomical Society. They secured what was then the largest refracting telescope in the world, and is at present the largest except two,—only one of which is superior to it,—and engaged Professor T. H. Safford to take charge. The cost of the telescope, the erection of the observatory buildings, the observing apparatus, the smaller (transit) telescope, and the current expenses of the observatory, have all been paid for, since then, by the Society or its individual members, without a single appeal to the public, till a few months ago; when a small subscription was taken up to aid the Society in furnishing the citizens of Chicago with the correct time from the Court House.

The original fund was raised by the payment of \$500 each by a few gentlemen, who were, by this act, constituted Life Directors of the Society; and the payment of \$100 each by several others, who thus became life members. This money has long since been expended, and the Executive Committee has no power to call on these members for more; meanwhile there is a pressing need of funds, not only to pay current expenses, but to effect repairs and extensions, which are imperatively required for the prosecution of the work assumed by the Society. The revolving dome is out of order, and can only be turned with great difficulty; the driving apparatus of the great equatorial is now unusable; a smaller instrument is an indispensable addition if a systematic search for comets and planetoids is to be undertaken; chronographic apparatus should be obtained to record the results of observations on the places of fixed stars; a set of self-registering meteorological instruments ought to be placed in the observatory, that we may obtain a knowledge of our true relation to atmospheric currents, which can never be gained by observations made a few times each day; and the library is sadly deficient in reference books and maps, absolutely indispensable to efficient work. To these we may add that there should be more than one astronomer (most observatories have several); and that the city of Chicago can scarcely afford to be unrepresented in the expeditions now preparing to observe the next transit of Venus across the sun's disc.

All, or any of these things, require money; and the two or three gentlemen to whom the conduct of the institution has been tacitly confided, by the absence of the rest from active co-operation, feel it their duty to appeal to the public for help. The present burden is as much as they can bear; they must have aid to meet increasing responsibilities, which the progress of science, and the gnawing tooth of time, render imperative. They know the object to be eminently worthy of a liberal support, and believe that the case needs only to be understood to be appreciated. They have, therefore, no hesitation in asking our men of means to help the cause of scientific investigation, by becoming members, or by donating such sums as they may be willing to spare to help forward the car of science. The Society should have a permanent fund of not less than \$80,000 to enable it to do the work expected of it; and requires not much less than \$20,000 more to put the observatory into good working condition—fit to take its place by the side of the other great observatories of the world, in which so many important discoveries have been made within the past few years.

The question is sometimes asked, What has the Chicago (Dearborn) Observatory done for science? It may be answered that it has done much

more than is usually supposed; and would have done very much more but for the fact that impecuniosity has been, from the first, a terrible drag on the wheels of its progress. Once let the institution be placed on a proper working basis, and there can be no doubt that Chicago will take the same leading place in astronomical discovery that she already occupies in business enterprise and as a commercial centre. To suppose it possible under present conditions, would be as absurd as to expect a Chicago dealer to rival the merchant princes of the East, without one cent of capital or a dollar's worth of credit.

What is really wanted is to organize a live association in this city, that will not only furnish the means required to carry on the observatory, but whose members will take an active interest therein, and meet regularly to see what is being done, gather information, exchange views, learn what they do not know, and take a pride in seeing that what they do know on this subject is communicated to others. Such an association would be a power in the world of science, and we hope to see it in existence at no distant day.

In the hope that their appeal will meet with a liberal response, the Society has delegated to Mr. COLBERT the task of calling personally upon such of our citizens as he may be able to reach. Those who do not receive a personal call, and are willing to help, are requested to communicate with him, at the *Tribune* office, or with any of the officers of the Society.

CHICAGO, May 22, 1871.



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